

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1138

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6277

USCINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT EXPRESSES OPTIMISM RE FUTURE

1. SUMMARY. DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT BELIEVES PROSPECT OF SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT HAS SUDDENLY BECOME GOOD, AND HE IS OPTIMISTIC LEBANESE SITUATION WILL IMPROVE. PLO IS ON ROPES AND MORE ISOLATED THAN BEFORE. SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT, BASED ON 1969 CAIRO ACCORD, WILL MAKE MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN RECONCILIATION POSITION. LEBANESE ARMY CAN BE FAIRLY EASILY RECONSTITUTED. PARTITION IS NOT RPT NOT A LIKELIHOOD. END SUMMARY.

2. MUNIR ABU FADIL, GREEK ORTHODOX DEPUTY SPEAKER OF LEBANSE PARLIAMENT, EXPRESSED OPTIMISM TO ME TODAY, JULY 15, REGARDING
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AMELIORATION OF CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON. HE SAID THAT IN PAST

WEEK HE HAS BEGUN TO HAVE FAITH THAT A MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS IS TAKING SHAPE. AS IN CASE OF SEVERAL OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS, ABU FADIL CHARACTERIZED PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AS PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO RESTORATION OF STABILITY IN LEBANON.

3. PLO-SYRIAN AGREEMENT. ABU FADIL BELIEVES THAT ARAFAT AND ASSAD WILL COME TO AN AGREEMENT, PERMITTING A CEASEFIRE AND AN AMELIORATION OF THE SITUATION. HE SAID ARAFAT IS GOING TO DAMASCUS TOMORROW IN COMPANY OF JALLOUD, ANTLWO IS POSSIBLE JUNBLATT WILL FOLLOW THERE LATER. CURRENTLY SYRIAN PRESS IS ATTACKING HIM STRONGLY AND UNDER THESE CONDITINS HE CANNOT PROCEED TO DAMASCUS. ABU FADIL BELIVES THAT PLO IS ON THE ROPES. IT HAS BEEN BADLY BEATEN IN THE FIELD OF BATTLE AND IS ISOLATED FROM KEY ARAB COUNTRIES. IN THIS CONNECTION HE CITED SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT. PRINCE SAUD IBN FAISAL IS FURIOUS WITH PLO FOR ITS INTRANSIGENCE QND LAST WEEK KUWAIT PARLIAMENT MANIFESTED ITS UNHAPPINESS BY REFUSING TO AGREE TO PROPOSED \$30 MILLION GRANT TO PLO. ABU FADIL THINKS THAT PLO WILL ACCEPT 1969 CAIRO ACCORD, WHICH WILL SERVE AS BASIS OF MODUS VIVENDI.

4. LEBANESE MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN RECONCILIATION. AS IN CASE OF OTHER LEBANESE PERSONALITIES WITH WHOM I HAVE TALKED IN PAST FEW WEEKS, ABU FADIL BELIEVES IF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON IS REGULATED, LEBANESE THEMSELVES WILL FIND WAY OF RECONCILING DIFFERENCES. HE FELT THAT THIS WOULD BE FACILITATED BY FROWING MOSLEM DISAFFECTION WITH PALESTINIANS AND YSRIANS. WHILE HE GRANTED THAT MARONITE LEADERS DO NOT RPT NOT APPEAR TO BE IN ANY MOOD TO CMPROMISE, SYRIA HAS IT WITHIN HER POWER TO PUT REQUISITE PRESSURES ON MARONITES.

5. PROSPECT OF ASSAULT ON WEST BEIRUT. ABU DFADIL DOES NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE EITHER SYRIANS OR MARONITES WILL LAUNCH ASSAULT ON WEST BEIRUT. EVEN IF MARONITES WANT TO DO SO, SYRIANS WILL REFUSE PERMISSION. ALSO MOSLEM RESISTANCE WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR MARONITES TO CROSS LINES SUCCESSFULLY.

6. RESTORATION OF SECURITY. ABU FADIL BELIEVES LEBANESE ARMY CAN BE RECONTSITUTED FAIRLY EASILY. HE CLAIMS THAT LT. KHATIB, CONFIDENTIAL

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HEAD OF LAA, HAS TOLD HIM HE ISPREPARED TO TAKE HIS FORCES BACK INTO ARMY AND THAT IN ANY CASE MOST OF LEBANESE ARMY HAS NOT RPT NOT GOTTEN INVOLVED IN CIVIL WAR. ABU FADIL INDICATED HE HAS ENDEAVORED TO GET AN UNDERTAKING FROM CHAMOUN TO PUT MARONITE FIGHTING UNITS UNDER A LEBANESE FLAG BUT HAS HAD NO REPLY AS YET.

7. SYRIAN DESIGNS. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, ABU FADIL DOUBTED

THAT SYRIA CURRENTLY HAS ANY TERRITORIAL DESIGNS ON LEBANON. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT SYRIANS WILL WITHDRAW FROM ALL OF LEBANON IF AND WHEN CEASEFIRE NEGOTIATED AND EFFECTIVE SECURITY FORCES ARE SET UP. HE DID NOT WISHT TO SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT OVER LONGER RUN SYRIA IS A DISINTERESTED PARTY VIS-A-VIS LEBANON.

8. PARTITION. ABU FADIL CONTENTS THAT MARONITES KNOW THAT PARTITION IS NOT FEASIBLE. HE CALLED ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT MARONITES IN MOUNT LEBANON CERTAINLY DO NOT RPT NOT REPRESENT ALL MARONITES, SOME OF WHOM LIVE OUTSIDE MOUNT LEBANON, AND CERTAINLY NOT OTHER CHRISTIANS. HE ALSO DOUBTED THATTHE CURRENT DE FACTO PARTITION WILL CONTINUE FOR LONG. HE BELIEVED THAT WITH CEASEFIRE AND NEUTRALIZING OF PALESTINIANS, DIVIDING LINE WOULD SOON EVAPORATE AND PEOPLE WOULD BE CROSSING BACK AND FORTH AS BEFORE.

9. COMMENT. ABU FADIL IS PRESENTLY LEADER OF A GREEK ORTHODOX GROUP WHICH IS ATTEMPTING TO EFFECT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN VARIOUS WARRING FACTIONS. I AM TOLD THAT HE TRIES TO KEEP A FOOT IN BOTH MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN CAMPS. DURING 1948 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, HE SERVED IN PALESTINIAN ARMY UNITS. HTUS, HE PROBABLY HAS GOOD CREDENTIALS WITH PALESTINIAN LEADERS AND PRESUMABLY HAS A GOOD FEEL FOR THEIR VIEWS. WHILE I FIND HIM SURPRISINGLY OPTIMISTIC, THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE AIR THESE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS THAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL THAT THINGS MAY BE LOOKING UP. IT IS RISKY, HOWEVER, TO ASSUME THIS, GIVEN THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE LAST 15 MONTHS. I TEND TO AGREE WITH ABU FADIL (AND TO DISAGREE WITH SOME MEMBERS OF MY STAFF WHO HAVE BEEN HERE FOR SOME TIME) THAT SYRIANS ARE UNLIKELY TO ATTACK WEST BEIRUT. WHETHER SYRIANS CAN EFFECTIVELY RESTRAIN MARONITE CHRISTIANS FROM DOING SO, HOWEVEY, IS A GOOD QUESTION. SOME ASTUTE OBSERVERS BELIVE THAT SYRIANS SERVE AS CONFIDENTIAL

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ANVIL FOR MARONITE HAMMER AND THAT THIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE CASE WITH REGARD TO FUTURE FIGHTING SPILLING OVER INTO THIS PART OF BEIRUT. FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THIS CHANCERY, NOISES OF NIGHTLY POUNDING OF BEIRUT BY SHELLS AND MORTARS HAS EASED MARKEDLY LAST 2 OR 3 NIGHTS. BUT CONTINUED ABSENCE OF UTILIES AND SHORTAGE OF BASIC FUEL SUPPLIES BECOMES MORE ACUTE AND MAKES LIVING HERE INCREASINGLY UNTENABLE. SEELYE

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